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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000387

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/31/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT YAR'ADUA OUTLINES INFRASTRUCTURE  
DEVELOPMENT FOR THE NIGER DELTA

REF: A. ABUJA 1878  
[1](#)B. LAGOS 375  
[1](#)C. ABUJA 1850 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: A/Consul General Richard Walsh, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: President Yar'Adua outlined major development projects and ownership-sharing of joint ventures for the Niger Delta in a meeting with South-South governors and former militants on October 9. Positive reactions to the plans were tempered by skepticism on delivery, but activists from the region agreed that the GON should be given at least six months to perform. End Summary.

#### Infrastructure Development and Ownership for Communities

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[1](#)2. (SBU) President Yar'Adua committed the GON to a series of measures designed to stimulate economic growth in the Niger Delta at a meeting in Abuja with the governors from the South-South region and former militant leaders on October 9, according to Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe (Reftel A). Local media reported that Governor Amaechi of Rivers State was "conspicuously absent." Former militant leaders Ateke Tom, Ebikabowei Victor Ben "Boyloaf," Saboma George, Farah Dagogo and Government Ekpemupolo "Tompolo" attended along with other lesser known militant figures.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Key measures included: 1) construction of a four-lane East-West highway from Calabar to Lagos; 2) a railroad line from Calabar to Lagos via Benin City; 3) a container terminal at Warri; and 4) ten per cent community ownership of oil and gas joint ventures in their communities. The infrastructure development projects would be financed through a supplemental budget and funneled through the Ministry of the Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and the two ownership proposals are to be added to the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) now before the National Assembly.

Youth Leader: "Promises are Cheap"

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[1](#)4. (C) Rex Anighoro of the Niger Delta Christian Youth Movement, who has close ties to militant hold out Dokubo Asari, pointed out to PolOff that the GON had promised and funded the East-West Highway months ago and contracts had already been awarded. Ebruke Esike of Global Peace Development claimed that the infrastructure development

projects predated the Niger Delta Technical Committee Report of December 2008, which also included them. ConGen Lagos contacts stressed that "promises are cheap," but agreed that President Yar'Adua's meeting with former militants and governors augured well for the future because this committed Yar'Adua personally to concrete development projects and ownership goals. They reserved judgment on his sincerity but felt the GON deserved six months to see if his promises are implemented.

#### Ownership Tied to PIB

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15. (C) Anighoro asked why the petroleum industry bill needed to be amended to rebuild the Niger Delta. He added that the bill was not in the interests of the International Oil Companies, and questioned whether the bill would be passed.

#### No Sustainable Development without Credible Elections

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16. (C) Both Anighoro and Esike stressed that, in the long term, only accountable government would ensure sustainable development and lasting peace. Anighoro called for a Sovereign National Conference to draft a constitution truly representative of the will of the Nigerian people. Esike said that "democracy has failed in Nigeria" and "without credible elections nothing will ever improve." Both felt that, with the exception of Adams Oshiomhole of Edo State, the governors of the South-South region were "part of the problem" because they belonged to the ruling Peoples'

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Democratic Party (PDP) and owed their positions to the party elite in Abuja rather than to the electorate.

#### Intensive Training for Real Jobs

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17. (C) Ijaw Youth Council President Chris Ekiyor welcomed President Yar'Adua's reported remarks but expressed concern for the short-term problem of finding meaningful employment for the youths who had surrendered their arms. He pointed to the riots that had already taken place in Yenagoa, Port Harcourt and Benin City, and said it was important "to get the boys out of POW camps and stop paying them for idleness." Ekiyor said he planned to call an Ijaw Youth Conference in the next couple of weeks and put forward a series of proposals to train the reformed militants for jobs that they can obtain. He suggested absorbing many youth into the Army and Police. Similarly, he said the youth in the Niger Delta, already familiar with oil production and transportation, should take over the oil servicing jobs subcontracted by IOCs to companies owned and controlled by military Joint Task Force members. Ekiyor also spoke of training youth as seamen, rig-workers, and welders.

#### Comment

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18. (C) President Yar'Adua's development promises are not new, but this represents the first time he has given them his personal support. Niger Delta activists suspect that by linking the community ownership proposals to the PIB, Yar'Adua aims to rally domestic and international support for aspects of the controversial legislation that faces stiff opposition from the IOCs and key Nigerian constituencies. End Comment.

19. (U) This cable has been coordinated with Embassy Abuja. WALSH